



November 2013 to December 2013

Behaviours Have Meaning

The Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO) Project began as an initiative to improve the health care experience for those clients with cognitive impairment presenting with responsive behaviours*. The influence and momentum of this project is now spreading beyond long-term care and community sectors to hospital wards considering new ways of improving approaches.

The messaging that 'Behaviours Have Meaning' is now impacting clinical practice in hospital departments outside of the specialized behavioural units. Health practitioners, who have historically provided expert acute medical care in the hospital setting, are now seeking out education to better understand responsive behaviours and the patient 'behind' the behaviours.

Through collaboration and partnerships with community and hospital-based geriatric experts, such as Psychogeriatric Resource Consultants and Nurse Educators, health practitioners are broadening their scope to meet the diverse needs of the BSO client in the acute care setting. These efforts are demonstrated in the story of Mrs. Ryan* and the acute internal medicine team at the Hamilton General Hospital.

The Story of Mrs. Ryan*

Mrs. Ryan, an 86 year old woman, was admitted to 8 South, the acute medicine floor, at Hamilton General Hospital. Mrs. Ryan was suffering from delirium on admission and was assessed as having a risk for falling. The medicine team immediately recognized some behaviours in Mrs. Ryan, particularly her need to constantly move and walk around. The team acted quickly to refer to the geriatrician, which resulted in a diagnosis of dementia.

In some cases when a patient is at risk for falling and has a cognitive impairment, one safe measure is to secure the patient in a wheelchair. However, when Mrs. Ryan was first placed in a wheelchair, Jana Cochrane, Occupational Therapist on 8 South, noticed the patient was exhibiting behaviours of 'yelling' and 'banging' on the wheelchair. Jana recognized these behaviours had meaning and through a thorough assessment learned Mrs. Ryan's behaviours resolved when she was permitted to walk around the ward.

Action Plan Highlights

Single point of contact for individuals and caregivers to connect with multiple resources and services

Organization to support individuals and caregivers by taking a lead role in coordinating programs and services across multiple organizations

Mobile outreach teams to support individuals and caregivers in the community when in crisis

Mobile outreach teams to support individuals and caregivers in long-term care

Toolkit for primary care providers to help them assess and manage patients with responsive behaviours

BSO Flyers are now available to share!

Flyers For Clients/Caregivers:

[BSO Connect Flyer](#)

[BSO Community Outreach Team \(Crisis\) Brochure](#)

[BSO Long-Term Care Mobile Team Flyer](#)

Flyers for Health Care Providers:

[BSO Connect Flyer](#)

[BSO Community Outreach Team \(Crisis\) Flyer](#)

[BSO Long-Term Care Mobile Team Flyer](#)

The Story of Mrs. Ryan*

The staff on the medicine floor wanted to safely address Mrs. Ryan's falls risk, while also limiting any potential for responsive behaviours. Jana reached out to those involved with BSO and was then connected with the Psychogeriatric Resource Consultant (PRC) from the Alzheimer's Society to discuss the case and make sure the team was on the right track for managing the responsive behaviours.

With collaboration from the medicine team, management, and the PRC, the team developed a care plan that addressed Mrs. Ryan's behaviours and safety. The team included the patient at the nursing station, performing small tasks so she safely expended her energy and fulfilled her need to constantly move. They also incorporated the help of family, volunteers, and RN students to support the patient early in her admission when her behaviours were initially heightened.

"The example of Mrs. Ryan was truly an interprofessional collaboration including efforts from the business clerks, staff nurses, charge nurses, student RNs, OTs, physios, clinical manager, social worker, HELP volunteers, and physician. Staff engaged the patient often in activities in the nursing station such as folding wash cloths, doing puzzles etc." - Jana Cochrane, OT, 8 South

As a result of their 'out-of-the-box' thinking, the team were able to avoid the use of restraints, meet the safety and medical needs of the patient, while fostering the abilities of the patient and decreasing responsive behaviours. Within less than one month on the medicine floor, a long-term care bed was offered to Mrs. Ryan.

"We understand clearly as a team now how the use of restraints in the past has been a barrier to transitioning our patients out of acute care into Long-Term Care Homes where all their care needs can be better met"
– Jana Cochrane, OT

*Real name withheld.

As demonstrated in Mrs. Ryan's story, 'ground-up' initiatives such as front-line staff strategizing to meet the unique needs of BSO clients, are far reaching in terms of the positive impact for both the client's experience and the broader health-care system. The medicine team on 8 South has witnessed the results for themselves and is currently implementing broader education to their staff on what are Responsive Behaviours, identifying their triggers, and collaborating as a team to develop care plans that do not involve the use of restraints.

Health care providers across all sectors have been striving to provide safe and effective care prior to Behavioural Supports Ontario; however, the development of BSO over the last 2 years has elevated the awareness of this population's unique needs. Health care providers are reaching out to experts in geriatrics and having conversations about the meaning of behaviours and how to best serve this older population with cognitive impairment and responsive behaviours. Health care providers in all sectors: hospital, community, and long-term care are collaborating in new ways and understanding a different approach is needed to ensure the best care and experience for this growing population.

Learn More

- [BSO in HNHB LHIN](#)
- [BSO Provincial Website](#)
- [HNHB Sustainability Plan](#)
- [BSO Final Implementation Report Including Q4](#)

***Responsive behaviours:** Includes pacing, wandering, verbal aggression, and physical aggression toward oneself or others.